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light house

A Madison Park family tosses aside its traditional roots to create a modern home that glows. | by Naomi Zeitlin

When two California natives moved to Seattle in 1996, they found a house that reminded them of the one they left behind: a Tudor on a quiet street filled with old homes in Madison Park. But the couple, neophytes to the Northwest cloud cover, found their California dreams dashed by their dark, dreary Seattle Tudor.

Four years later, the sunlight-starved pair was finally ready to remodel. They hired Lisa Kirkendall of Latini-Kirkendall Architecture to transform their Tudor into an 8,000-square-foot, Mediterranean-influenced home with an outdoor pool. But just as construction was about to begin, they discovered a sun-filled, narrow lot overlooking Lake Washington for sale just a few doors down. The couple scrapped the remodel, bought the property, and with Kirkendall's help set out to build an entirely new home.

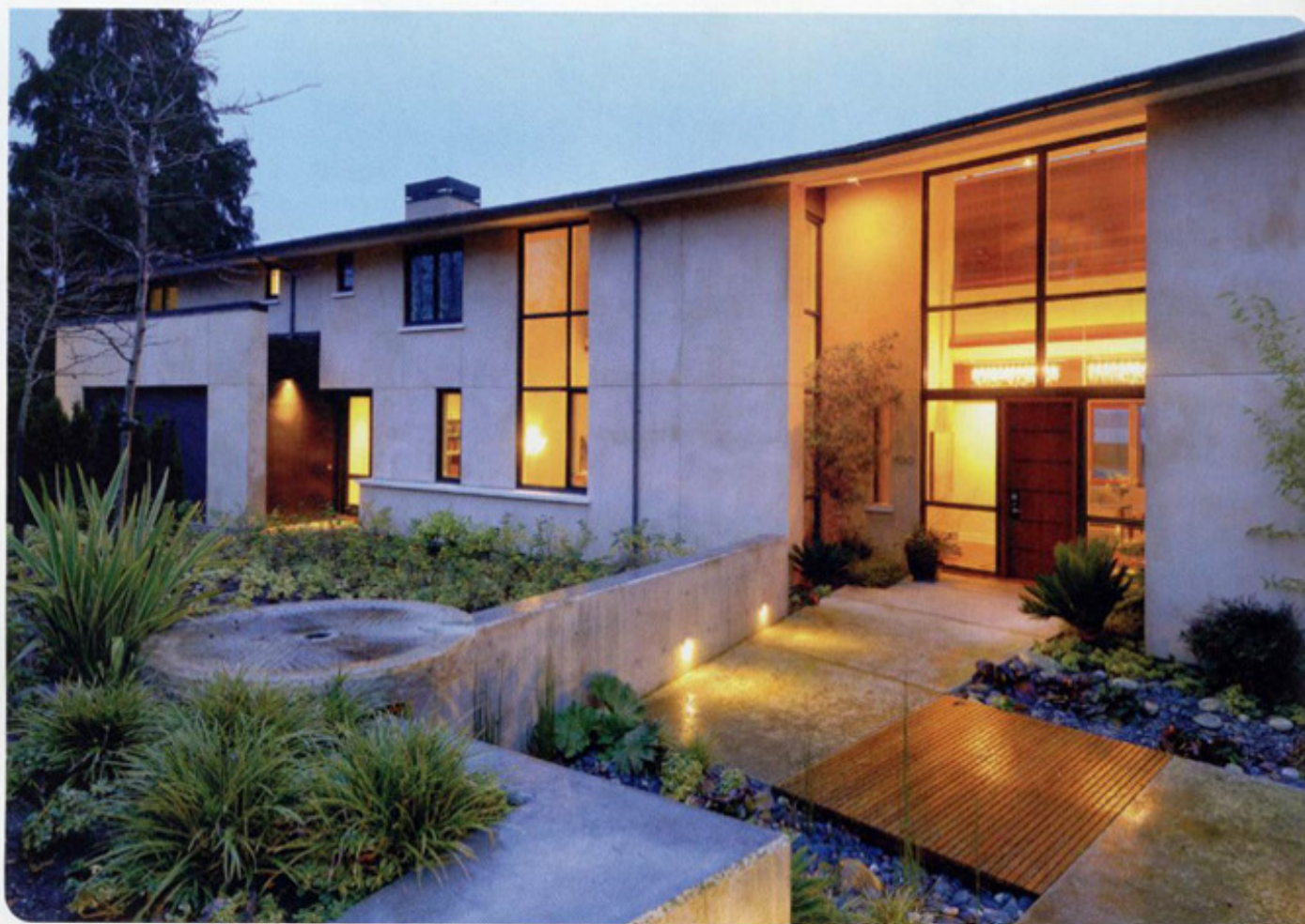
The two placed their trust in the designer's hands, making only a few specific requests: lots of light and access to the lake view, natu-

ral materials, ample play space for their two young sons, a gourmet kitchen for her, and an interior design that would match their existing furniture. Kirkendall envisioned huge floor-to-ceiling panes of glass lining the entire east side of the ground floor and a skylight running the length of the central hallway. The modern proposal unsettled them at first, says the wife: "It was a learning process. We worried that 'modern' meant 'cold and sterile.'" They also hesitated to disrupt the more traditional look of the area with a contemporary home and consulted with neighbors throughout the four-year design process. Kirkendall even modified the plan to maintain a next-door neighbor's view of the lake.

Kirkendall worked closely with Jerry Fulks and Tom Marston of the Fulks construction firm, along with interior designer Jan Holbrook, the wife's longtime friend, to ensure they didn't undercut any of the elements the couple desired. "It was like a Rubik's cube," Kirkendall says. "Between my work, Tom and



Open up Architect Lisa Kirkendall oriented the main family room to take advantage of the views of Lake Washington (top). The central hallway is capped by a ceiling of glass (above) to fill the top two floors with natural light—even on a gray day.



About face Kirkendall designed the front of the house (top) to curve with the street to better blend with the area's more modest homes. The chef's kitchen (above) faces the lake.

the builders, and Jan, we felt that we would be able to push all of their ideas to a successful closure."

Kirkendall embedded the three-story house deep in the hillside and conformed the facade to the curve of the street, maintaining the modest scale of the neighborhood. The front wing contains the foyer, a bathroom, and two offices. To maximize the

views of Lake Washington from the kitchen, living, dining, and family areas in the rear wing of the house, Kirkendall specified a 108-foot-long swath of floor-to-ceiling windows. A glass-roofed hallway connects the two wings, flooding the top two floors with natural light in one seamless gesture.

For the builder, the glass installations in the roof and the east-facing windows proved especially difficult. "It's hard to line up 20 custom windows and make sure that they will all be perfect, and we had many glass and waterproofing experts consult on the skylight," Marston says. "We looked at every dimension and plane change. If it doesn't work, you just bought yourself a skylight that doesn't fit anywhere."

For the family, the engineering challenges were worth the effort. Mom, a former line chef at an upscale French restaurant in San Francisco, helped design her ideal kitchen, which features two ovens, six burners, a butcher block, and stone counters for rolling out pastry dough. "The only thing I wish I added is a pizza oven," she admits, but concedes the view of Lake Washington more than makes up for the omission. She sneaks peeks at the dazzling twilight views



of the water and downtown Bellevue beyond as she whips up dinner and supervises her sons' homework each evening.

Those grand windows invite the outdoors to mingle with the home's interiors, and Kirkendall and Holbrook brought natural elements indoors to marry the two spaces. Stucco, inspired by the couple's California roots, is used on the exterior and on the wall

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behind the dining room fireplace, and the cedar planks encasing the pavilion are also used inside the main hallway. Even the wall of windows extends a few feet around the north and south sides of the home to compound the effect.

Holbrook combined stone and wood with a warm palette of marine blue, dusty yellow, and pale pink to soften the modern design and match the family's existing fur-

niture. An oversize petrified teak fireplace dominates the dining room, and the family room fireplace introduces a motif of sand-colored sea-grass limestone with embedded fossils. The theme repeats on the kitchen table's Belgian blue stone surface, which is studded with pearlescent fossils. They chose Brazilian cherry wood for the floors and dark mahogany for vertical accents, and dressed the shelving and cabinetry in veneer strips from a single fiddleback maple, creating a beautiful symmetry throughout the house.

The home is sprinkled with playful elements for the kids. An outdoor cushioned-floor play area complete with climbing wall, a toy-filled playroom in the basement, and a nine-by-six-foot, dual-head shower (patterned after an outdoor version at the family's favorite Hawaiian retreat) were designed specifically for them. The main staircase and the spiral stairs that lead from an office to a reading loft on the upper level have been commandeered by the boys, who race to see who can get to their bedrooms the fastest.

Mom couldn't be happier with the end result. Now, when the sun shines over Seattle, California doesn't seem so far away, and even on gray days they don't have to turn on the house lights until dusk. "Could we ever move?" she asks herself. "Oh no. I think we'll keep this house forever." 🌸

RESOURCES



ARCHITECT

Lisa Kirkendall Latina-Kirkendall Architecture
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206-789-7139; www.lkarchitecture.com

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Fulks
1305 E Jefferson St, Seattle
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16830 14th Ave NW, Shoreline
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